



PUBLIC SAFETY & SECURITY COMMITTEE
February 16, 2017

My name is Mayor Ken Cockayne from the City of Bristol.

I am here to testify in opposition to **SB 763 “An Act Concerning Workers’ Compensation Coverage for Police Officers, Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder”**

As the Mayor of Bristol I am grateful for the work that our first responders perform on a daily basis. They are an integral part of our community. However, I have serious concerns that this would be another costly unfunded mandate on towns and cities.

If the bill were to be enacted, the financial implications would likely be considerable. Based on previous reports from legislation proposed in years past, these claims could reach over \$1 million for the duration of the claim. To date, there remains no funding mechanism that would support towns and cities should a claim be filed under this proposal. As a result, our city – and every other municipality throughout Connecticut – would be forced to set aside funds to build a foundation for any potential claim. This would run contiguous with towns and cities with already struggling finances.

Since becoming mayor, I have been an advocate with other municipal leaders to reduce unfunded state mandates on municipalities. Local leaders strive to make sound financial decisions by creating efficiencies and often making difficult decisions. If enacted, this proposal would place a strain on the backs of local property taxpayers with limited control from local leaders.

Again, local officials value the service of first responders. We have invested in both their physical and mental health. To that end, municipal employees have a host of benefits to assist them during difficult times, they include health insurance, disability leave and Employee Assistance Programs. These are programs that we fund and are negotiated through our labor agreements.

CCM acknowledges and value the important role public safety personnel have in our communities. We are grateful for their commitment to protect and serve and for the risks they assume on behalf of Connecticut’s residents. What is at question is whether local property taxpayers – and their municipal budgets – should be mandated to provide special mental stress benefits from “witnessing” or its “aftermath” – without any financial assistance from the State.

The General Assembly has, and should continue to be wise to take no action on this proposed new state mandate. The current fiscal climate should prompt relief from existing state mandates, and all new proposed mandates – regardless of merit – be opposed.

I urge the Committee to **take no action** on SB 763.

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If you have any questions, please contact Mike Muszynski, Advocacy Manager of CCM at mmuszynski@ccm-ct.org or (203) 500-7556.